



# Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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## STOP THE UKIP/TORY DEMAGOGUES!



# EU: STAY AND FIGHT!

**US President Barack Obama is expected this week to make a speech calling for Britain to remain in the European Union.**

When Obama does this, he is saying that remaining in the EU is what is best for capitalism. However, what is bad for capitalism, in this case leaving the EU, is not necessarily good for workers. Remaining in the EU is also better for workers.

European capitalism (which the US has an interest in keeping stable) has — in its own interests — substantially integrated Europe both economically and politically. By doing so, European bosses have also increased the possibilities for Europe-wide workers' unity.

To try to break up the process of integration is as regressive as trying to turn the internet off because that is run by capitalist companies.

Or attempting to abolish parliament without bothering to ensure that bourgeois democracy is replaced with something better.

We call for democratic reform of the EU, including a sovereign EU Parliament.

**We fight for freedom of movement and an end to "Fortress Europe".**

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### Strikes can stop junior contract



Junior doctor Pete Campbell explains how junior doctors can win.



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### A movement for free speech



*Solidarity* considers questions of free speech on university campuses and the freedom of the press.

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### The rage of the refugee



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### Momentum to debate the EU referendum

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# Telecoms workers strike against corporate greed

By Ira Berkovic

**Around 40,000 workers employed by Verizon, one of America's biggest telecommunications companies, are striking to win a decent contract.**

The strike began on Wednesday 13 April, when the company failed to settle a contract with the workers' union, the Communication Workers of America (CWA).

Verizon wants to cut workers' pension and healthcare benefits. It also wants to continue a policy of outsourcing jobs to other countries; the CWA says Verizon has outsourced around 5,000 call centre and customer service jobs to Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and the Philippines since the last contract negotiations, which also saw workers strike for two weeks, in 2011.

There are also plans to deploy technicians on placements away from home for months at a time, in what the union says is a calculated attempt to force workers out of their jobs.

The company claims that cuts



and outsourcing are necessary because the landline ("wireline") side of Verizon's business is losing money. However, while total gross revenue fell by 1.8% in 2015, the business still made \$8.9 billion dollars. Verizon's super-fast "FiOS" broadband network, part of the landline division, increased sales by 9% in 2015. However, Verizon bosses have held back from using

massive profits from the company's wireless division to grow the FiOS business, prompting claims that they are deliberately running down the more heavily-unionised side of the business to expand more non-unionised areas.

Verizon bosses have also boasted of training up non-union workers to cover the work of strikers for the duration of the dispute.

Those workers from Verizon's wireless division who are unionised are also involved in the current strike. Jazmin Sypher, a Verizon wireless worker involved in the strike, told the *Guardian*:

"We saw how the union workers on Verizon's wireline side — the employees who install Fios broadband and maintain the company's copper lines — were able to maintain a decent standard of living for their families. We workers on the wireless side felt it was only fair to join with them and win improvements as well.

"Verizon's executives felt differently, and they've fought us ferociously. Two years after I and a hundred other wireless workers voted to come together in the union, Verizon is still refusing to settle a fair first contract with us.

"Even though we wireless workers are a small sliver of the nearly 40,000 workers on strike right now from Massachusetts to Virginia, our inability to win a first contract is one of the strike's biggest issues — and one Verizon doesn't want people to hear about.

"Verizon's executives are desper-

ate to stop the tens of thousands of other wireless workers from joining together in our union. By denying most of us collective bargaining, they've been able to worsen our job conditions, and keep our pay low, while they pump up the company's profits higher and higher."

The strike is seen by many as an emblematic fight against corporate America's attempts to drive down wages, distribute profits upwards, and outsource work to non-unionised, low-wage labour markets elsewhere in the world. The CWA is one of the national unions to have formally endorsed Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign; Sanders addressed strikers on a picket line in New York while campaigning in the Democratic primary there.

The Verizon strike overlapped with the latest day of action in the ongoing campaign of fast food and other low-paid workers, mainly in the service sector, for a \$15/hour minimum wage.

**Workers and supporters staged protests, rallies, and other actions in 300 cities across America on Thursday 14 April.**

# Kuwaiti oil workers take on the ruling elite

By Ralph Peters

**By the time this paper goes to press over 13,000 oil workers in Kuwait will have been on strike for four days.**

Strikes are exceedingly rare in the oil producing oligarchies of the Gulf States. The workforce, made up of mainly migrant workers, usually have appalling living conditions and no civil or trade union rights.

This is the first major strike in Kuwait in many years, although the last months have seen growing activity from a number of Kuwaiti unions in tourism and from municipal workers.

There was a flurry of public sector strikes in September-October 2011 leading to street protests, the resignation of prime minister, the dissolution of parliament, and new elections.

These strikes come at another time of crisis across the Gulf states. This time low oil prices and economic deficit is the background.

The cost for the Gulf States is high. Kuwait has a population of less than four million, nearly half of whom are migrants. It has lost 60% of its revenue, with a deficit estimated to rise to \$40 billion this year — \$20,000 per Kuwaiti citizen.

Average income in Kuwait is frequently reported as being amongst the top five per capita incomes in the world, but there are huge inequalities. Migrants, some of whom have been there for 40-50 years, live in dire poverty; there are increasing hardships for indigent Kuwaitis.

As in all the oil states the public sector and the oil industry is generally used to distribute wealth lavishly and opaquely to the ruling elite. The wealth is not used to diversify or develop the economy. In Kuwait as in Saudi Arabia, the ruling class have decided to reorganise their economy. The public sector, including Kuwaiti oil, is being privatised. They hope to shake off some of the rentier wastages while retaining the capitalist concentration of wealth among the ruling class.

There are regimes far more brutal and undemocratic than Kuwait, but it is no democracy. The Emir is head of state, the Prime Minister is appointed from the Emir's own royal family, the oil company executives are generally from families close to the Emir.

## RESTRICTIONS

**And despite there being a somewhat independent parliament there are increasing restrictions on free speech and little possibilities for workers or the rest of the population to form political parties.**

In July 2014, in response to growing protests, the cabinet pledged "an iron fist policy and a decisive and firm confrontation with whatever could undermine the state. Scores of human rights and democracy activists, journalists, online critics have been arrested and imprisoned usually on the pretext of "insulting" the Emir, Kuwait's ally Saudi Arabia, or Islam.

Particularly under attack are the 100,000 Arabic Bidun, who had

legal nationality prior to 1985 but are now designated stateless despite having been in Kuwait all their lives. There have been hundreds of arrests at Bidun protests, and deportations. Prominent activists Abdulhakim al-Fadhli, who was repeatedly arrested and detained on a range of charges between 2011 and 2014, and 'Abdullah 'Atallah, was sentenced on 1 July 2015 to five years in prison, including for "insulting the Emir".

The ruling elite are in total polit-

ical control and the proposed reorganisation of the economy will therefore inevitably consist of attacks on working class living standards.

And that is what the oil workers see with the current attacks on their pay and benefits. The Kuwait rulers have already started to pull in overseas oil workers from India and Egypt to break the strike. Last year they got voted through parliament the option of using troops in the oilfields if national supplies are put at risk.

Despite their comparatively low number — 13,000 on strike — the oil workers enjoy wide support. They have felt confident enough to declare an indefinite strike.

This strike may go on for weeks. Even if the oil workers are not victorious in the first instance, but especially if they are, it will send powerful messages to workers across the oil states of the Gulf and even Iran.

**The workers in this part of the world are again on the march.**

# Brussels workers demand safety

By Janine Booth

**I have been talking with Brussels transport workers and trade unionists in the aftermath of the 22 March Daesh bombings which killed 32 people and injured hundreds more.**

Two workers died in the Brussels airport bombing — one working on check-in, the other in baggage handling. Others were injured, and still more were traumatised by what they experienced. At least 14 passengers also perished.

I was told that once the airport has been attacked, the decision was taken to close the Metro, but the chaotic administration of Brussels' public transport did not get the message out. Half an hour later, the second wave of explosions hit Maelbeek Metro station, killing a further 16 people. This need not have happened.

The Metro station that was bombed was unstaffed, and the driver of the Metro train survived. The absence of staff must surely have delayed raising the alarm and helping the casualties. Maelbeek is not the largest or the busiest station on the Brussels Metro, but it is the nearest to the US embassy.

Transport employers are providing counselling, but not enough for everyone who needs it.

Workers are scared to return to work — because of the trauma, but also because they have little confidence in the security measures provided by their employers.

Security equipment is inadequate and outdated. There are a lot of access points to the airport, and trade unionists demonstrated to the employers that people could get in to secure areas with invalid passes.

So when management wanted to open the airport after the attacks, the airport police went on strike. The press and politicians complained about the action, blaming the unions, but the strike won a deal, with security measures including more staff deployed at the airport entrances, and luggage scanned there rather than only at departure.

Three weeks on from the attacks, air traffic controllers stayed away from work, phoning in sick because they are not confident in their safety at work. Over 50 flights were cancelled on the morning of Wednesday 12 April.

**The action was portrayed in the media as a dispute about a rise in the pre-retirement age from 55 to 58, but it was as much to do with safety fears.**

• Longer version of this article at [bit.ly/1QkDatr](http://bit.ly/1QkDatr)





# Next steps for junior doctors

**By Pete Campbell, BMA Junior Doctors' Committee, personal capacity**

You may have watched an hour of half truths and lies slander from the Secretary of State for Health in Parliament on 18 April. Here are some answers to Hunt's slander.

Junior doctors cannot close Accident and Emergency Departments, despite what the government will have you believe.

During the all-out strike on 26-27 April the consultants and specialist doctors who would normally be providing non-urgent or elective services will cover our work. Emergency and Urgent Services will still be running and patients will be seen by the most senior doctors in the hospital.

Who can close A&E's?

1. Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health, since he gave himself the legal powers to do so after being stopped by a Judicial Review from closing Lewisham Hospital, called by the local campaign.

2. NHS Management. As part of cuts to services, or when they simply don't have the staff.

This is not just a pay dispute. It's about safe rotas. Across the country hospitals are being asked to draw up rotas for the new contract. It's an impossible task. They don't yet know how many junior doctors they will have to fill these rotas. And they don't know how to match these rotas to some of this government's impossible promises on weekend working. (The government claim simultaneously that junior doctors will work both more and less weekends.)

Hospitals also don't know how to match our training requirements to the new rotas, to ensure that we continue to receive the high quality training we need for us to be high quality consultants in the future.

The government continues to claim that this contract is about reducing weekend mortality. This could not be further from the truth. Driving thousands of junior doctors out of the country and out of

the medical profession will not improve weekend mortality. Junior Doctors already provide a 24/7 seven-day-a-week emergency and acute service.

If the government really wanted to improve weekend admission mortality rates they would look at specific interventions, such as the ones made with stroke services or for patients with heart attacks. They could see how other services could be improved to match.

Instead Hunt has created a new contract which rips up the safeguards which protect junior doctors from working unsafe hours. His claim to be on the side of patients is nothing short of a sham.

## SEVEN DAY

**The government claims that by providing £10 billion extra funding they will be able to fund a "seven day service." Conservative estimates put the money required to fund our current NHS at its current level at £30 billion across the life of this parliament. Once again their figures just don't add up.**

Jeremy Hunt likes to mention that Sir David Dalton recommend that no negotiated deal was possible. What he neglects to mention is that a large part of this recommendation is based on the stubbornness and irrationality of the Secretary of State for Health.

The step up to an all-out strike from the previous strikes where emergency care was provided is a serious escalation for junior doctors, but it cannot be the end. It is likely that more strikes, and further escalation will be needed. But where can we go from an all out strike?

One possibility is to escalate to include evening strikes, going from 8am-5pm to 8am-8pm. Another is weekend strikes. These would mean less lost pay, as only 40% of the workforce are at work on weekends, but would cause a huge headache for hospital managements, who will need to get consultants into cover the work.

Such escalations need to be part

of a timetable of strikes which is publicised. For example three days strike, then strikes including evenings, then strikes on Saturdays, then strikes on a run of days to include Saturday.

The junior doctors' ballot also gave a mandate for industrial action short of strikes, and that mandate has not been used so far. Such action is almost by definition more individualised than strikes, and should not replace them, but can complement them.

"Soft" action short of strike could include the BMA asking every junior doctor to explain to each patient why they are taking industrial action. That could be followed up with a leaflet, or similar, encouraging patients to contact their MP, etc.

"Harder" action short of strike could mean refusing to fill out the paperwork concerned with coding and payment-by-results methodology. That would have a large financial impact on trusts, and, if done properly, no impact on patient care. It would require careful planning.

Another possibility is a BMA call for no doctors to take locum shifts. That would bring a significant financial hit for some doctors, and we would need to ensure that the hardship fund is in a robust state.

In the program of strikes, and the action short of strikes, the public political campaign must not be neglected.

The BMA must call a national demonstration, and soon. The whole labour movement should get behind such a demonstration.

The last major demonstration in support of junior doctors was on 6 February. That's more than two months ago!

Locally junior doctors have shown great creativity and energy in organising street stalls, protests and other actions, but this may fizzle out if not supported. The large demonstration to save the NHS in Leeds on Saturday 16 April (see page 11) shows that lively local demonstrations can be organised.

**As does the planned joint National Union of Teachers and BMA demonstration organised for 26 April in London.**

# Schools protest grows

**By a Lewisham teacher**

**Campaigning against the education White Paper — Educational Excellence Everywhere — is beginning to gather pace across the country.**

On 23 April the Parents Defending Education conference will take place in London. Organised by the Anti-Academies Alliance the conference is supported by teaching unions NUT and ATL. The Rescue Our Schools campaign has also been set up by parents to stand up for state education ([www.rescueourschools.co.uk](http://www.rescueourschools.co.uk)).

What is required to defeat the White Paper, as well as industrial action to defend workers' conditions, is local vibrant campaigns.

Barnet Trades Council and Barnet Momentum have passed motions committing them to launch campaigns. Meanwhile, Barnet Local Government Unison branch will meet soon to discuss amendments to their leadership's motions on White Paper which are going to Local Government and Delegate conference.

The amendments seek an undertaking to organise industrial action alongside the other education unions, to fight for national terms and conditions for support workers. The branch is also likely to endorse building the local campaign against the White Paper.

Haringey Momentum has passed a motion to mount a campaign. Moves are afoot within the local NUT, Unison local government branch and Labour Party to get endorsement for a local initiative.

In Sheffield, model motions to support a campaign are being circulated in local Labour Parties and trade unions. Sheffield NUT has been busy recruiting new school reps

Lewisham NUT has committed itself to work alongside local anti-academy campaigns, Momentum and other local labour movement

organisations in building Lewisham's campaign against the White Paper. There is an NUT workplace reps meeting organised for 27 April to build for the ballot for action.

Lewisham NUT has also endorsed the initiative organised by supporters of the teachers' rank-and-file group LANAC, Lewisham BMA, and Greenwich NUT, which on 1 May will see junior doctors and teachers working together making banners before going on to a local ten-pin bowling alley for a social event. The event is aimed at strengthening the links between local doctors and teachers in their disputes with the government.

London Region NUT has supported the North and South Thames BMA demonstration on Tuesday 26 April in support of the junior doctors' dispute.

**These initiatives are just the start of the campaign. Activists, whether they work in schools, are parents, or just want to reverse the tide of Tory privatisation of public services, should follow these examples and build local campaigns.**

## Take action!

### PARENTS DEFENDING EDUCATION CONFERENCE

**Saturday 23 April, 1-4pm, Hamilton House, Macleod Place, London WC1H 9BD [antiacademies.org.uk](http://antiacademies.org.uk)**

### MARCH TOGETHER TO SUPPORT THE JUNIOR DOCTORS

**Tuesday 26 April Meet 5pm at St. Thomas' Hospital, Lambeth Palace Road. March to the Department of Health**

# Bosses dodge living wage

**By Charlotte Zalens**

**It's only been two weeks since the introduction of the "living wage" of £7.20 an hour but already employers are attempting to claw back costs wherever possible.**

B&Q has reportedly implemented the raise by cutting Sunday and Bank Holiday pay and bonuses, making some workers as much as £2000 a year worse off.

Toyoda Gosei, a car parts manufacturer, has ended paid breaks. Morrisons, Tesco, Dunelm and Wilko are all cutting Sunday and overtime pay. Waitrose has ended higher Sunday and Bank Holiday rates for all new staff.

A nationally-imposed higher minimum wage should not result

in losses for workers, but the government has no plans to stop employers trying to get round the changes.

Businesses are getting a £15 billion tax break to "afford" the wage increase, with corporation tax falling from 28% in 2010 to 17% in 2020.

Meanwhile top bosses are still getting millions of pounds in pay and bonuses. Shareholders in BP recently voted down a pay package of £14 million for chief executive Bob Dudley — but the vote is only advisory.

**Such bosses are implementing cuts to workers overtime pay and breaks to "afford" the minimum wage increase while happily taking home millions for themselves.**



# A different “no” could win

By Vincent Pr sumey\*

British worker militants have an interest in campaigning for a workers’ “no”, and particularly in pushing Jeremy Corbyn that way.

It is David Cameron who is demanding a “yes” vote. It is not a “yes” to “Europe”, but a “yes” to keeping the country in a EU which offers maximum guarantees to the City and deprives hundreds of thousands of migrant workers of social rights, thus pushing down wages in Britain. Concretely it is a matter of saying “yes” to that, and to the leader of the current government.

Some say that “no” would be worse. It would advance the xenophobic surge by Ukip, the Tories, and the like. Thus we must say “no” to the “no”, which means “yes”.

We heard that in France in 1992 [the Maastricht referendum] and 2005 [referendum on the draft EU constitution]. Some of those people are already in the government. A victory for “no” would appear as their victory and would be used by them against migrant workers if, and only if, we give them the possibility of monopolising the call for a “no” vote.

## PLATFORM

**Obviously we should confront them, and certainly not have common platforms with them, as the always-disastrous Galway does.**

But there is another movement in Britain today: that of the anti-cuts protests and of the Corbyn victory in the Labour Party, a movement which is also partly expressed in the surge for Scottish independence.

Are the interests of that movement to be assimilated to the defenders of the established order, of the existing EU, which has been revised and worsened in a xenophobic direction by the “concessions” won by Cameron? Or to be the factor by which the “no” wins?

Besides, isn’t there a risk that a Labour “yes” campaign will be taken up by the



party machine and by the Parliamentary Labour Party, who will make it an excellent means to “renormalise” the party and try to neutralise the impact of Corbyn’s victory.

It would good if British comrades would stop imagining that in saying “yes” to the EU they are saying “yes” to Europe. Internationalism is also solidarity with the peoples who have already broadly said no, including the French people — with the Greeks, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Irish, and all those who more and more oppose the EU. And with those who combat the logical evolution of the Schengen “fortress” Europe and of a series of little fortresses.

Obviously it is not a question of just campaigning for “no”. It is a matter of working for it to be the working class, and not the protectionist sectors of capital, who defeat Cameron on this issue and can open perspectives:

Of a Labour government which would meet urgent demands;

Of a new contract of association between the nations within Britain (for the question of Scottish independence links to that of the EU);

**Of the place of Britain in a free and democratic union of the nations and peoples of Europe.**

\* Originally published as part of a discussion amongst French socialists in the bulletin *Arguments pour la lutte sociale*, no.35.

# Oppose all nationalisms

## LETTERS

In his article (‘Proud to be a Zionist’, *Solidarity* 400), Eric Lee argued “a Zionist is a person who supports the Jewish people’s right to a national homeland.”

Under that generous definition vast numbers of people are Zionists. Eric’s definition of Zionism is actually the same as many “absolute anti-Zionists” on the British left who would argue that anyone who concedes that Israeli Jews, as a people, should have the right to self-determination alongside the Palestinians, is Zionist.

Both positions nullify Zionism of its political content and its context and they deny the possibility of a consistent international socialist position of defending the right of the Israeli people to their own state while also opposing Israeli nationalism. We oppose that nationalism as we oppose all nationalisms — in its Labour Zionist as well as its more conservative and religious variations.

The Zionist movement in its political form grew up as a reaction to the discrimination and persecution faced by Jews during the 19th century. It was a movement away from demanding civil rights and equality for Jews everywhere and towards setting up a separate Jewish homeland.

Eventually two wings of the Zionist movement emerged. The first was “political Zionism” that looked to make a deal with great powers, religious institutions and bourgeois settlement agencies to bring this state about. The other was Labour Zionism — a form of utopian socialism that argued for the setting up of kibbutzim and co-operatives to create a secular socialist Jewish homeland.

Both forms of Zionism were opposed by the socialists of the Second International and later by the Bolsheviks and the early Third International. Socialists argued that the agency for Jewish liberation was working-class struggle. But the Second World War, the Holocaust and Stalinism practically killed off

the international socialist movement many Jews had been involved in.

More and more Jewish refugees headed for Palestine, in an atmosphere of renewed hostility to Jews after the Second World War. Unfortunately that boosted the political prestige of Zionism. The only sensible position for socialists at the time was for the raising of democratic rights for Jews in Palestine and for self-determination, alongside Palestinians; both communities were ruled by the British.

Once the Israeli state had been set up both wings of Zionism developed into the patriotic chauvinistic ideologies and became associated with two wings of the Israeli ruling class.

Now I am guessing most Jews wherever they live in the world probably think of themselves as Zionists, just as the Irish diaspora probably think of themselves as Irish nationalists or patriots, or the Kurdish diaspora as Kurdish people who want to see a Kurdish state.

Yet among those diasporas, while socialists would always argue for national rights, we would not endorse nationalism. That is the positive endorsement of the nationalistic outlook which at one extreme amounts to chauvinism. Nationalism is a block to the development of the cause of socialism world wide.

We are for consistent democracy. That is, we are for two states in Israel-Palestine. The Palestinian people’s right to self determination is currently being denied. But even this self determination should not nullify the Israeli people’s national rights.

Zionism (which today should be more accurately called Israeli nationalism) is not uniquely evil, as some on the left whose anti-Zionism flirts with anti-semitism would have us believe.

**Yet neither should it be exempt from ruthless criticism of all nationalisms and chauvinisms — the enemies of the international workers’ movement.**

Luke Hardy, Leeds

# The main enemy is at home

By Martin Thomas in reply to Vincent Pr sumey

In France the most influential paper of the left calling for the country to quit the EU is *La Tribune des Travailleurs*.

According to *La Tribune*, the EU is bad because it is... under the thumb of the City of London!

So leftists in France should want France to quit in order to elude the grip of the mainspring of capitalism, located in Britain? And leftists in Britain should want to quit to escape the grip of the mainspring of capitalist power, located... where?

In “the Brussels bureaucracy”? Hardly. In the early 1970s, when would-be left agitation about “the Brussels bureaucracy” as the force that would impose capitalist policies on Britain was at its peak, Tom Nairn commented drily: “the employees of the Common Market Commission were approximately one fifteenth of the number working in one British Ministry”.

With 28 states in the EU, the European Commission staff has grown. It is still less than 8% the size of the British civil service. And unlike the British civil service, it has no police or armed forces or speedy means of legal enforcement to aid it.

Even if we had a strong would-be left surge of anti-EUism in Britain — as we did in the 1970s — it could lead nowhere positive. A working class mobilised to see deliverance through high national frontiers to ward off “the Brussels bureaucracy” would be helpless against its actual chief capitalist enemy “at home”.

In 2016, the idea of a left “no” is fantasy. Ukip and the Tory right have many voters behind them, mobilised on simple slogans: keep out immigrants, reduce “regulation”. The few Labour MP Brexiters work with the right-wing “out” campaigns. On the 16 April anti-austerity march, some left-of-Labour Brexiters were distributing leaflets from “Vote Leave” [the official Tory “out” campaign].

A recently-published poll shows majorities against Brexit of 74%-to-7% in Portugal, 72%-to-10% in Ireland, 70%-to-6% in Spain, and 50%-to-15% in Greece.

Of course the EU has capitalist policies. A voluntary confederation of capitalist states, with much-lowered borders between them, is capitalist.

**It is, however, a better starting point for the struggle for social levelling-up, for democracy, for solidarity, than the same 28 capitalist states with high borders between them.**

# The worst of all worlds

Matt Cooper is right to criticise the article about Basic Income, written by Andrew Harrop on the Fabian website, for its timidity (*Solidarity*, 400).

However, a bigger problem is that Harrop makes something fairly simple unnecessarily complicated. A major advantage of BI is that it does not require much in the way of paper work, calculations, assessments and, most important of all, there is no means testing. Harrop’s “half-way house” proposal gives us the worst of all worlds: it is not a BI and it requires some kind of means testing.

There is no reason for this. Experience demonstrates that a BI can be introduced without all this farting about and that it is embraced by all concerned — after all if you are going to receive, say £100 a week for doing nothing extra in your life, why wouldn’t you be happy!

I have made this point before in the pages of *Solidarity*, but there is a crying need to look at the concrete experiences of where BI has been tried (two pilot schemes in Madyah Pradesh, India; Manitoba, Canada; Botswana, the semi-BI currently operating in Alaska and others). These experiences are all well-documented and should be studied closely.

Trying to widen out the discussion — BI needs to be linked to a re-thinking of the whole idea of work and leisure, of the need

to reduce the current working week. The Fabians are quite right to suggest a three day weekend.

We work too many hours, too much overtime and too many “voluntary” extra hours. This is bad for our health (physical and mental). Social and family life suffer, and there is little evidence it boosts productivity. Andre Gorz suggested that a 1000 hour *year* is quite feasible. We should think seriously about this.

The old miners had it absolutely right in their historic reluctance to work on Mondays; the story goes that a miner’s son asks, “Dad, why do you only work four days a week? The miner replies, “Son, we can’t afford for me to work three days”. We need to be seriously thinking about and discussing: a drastic reduction in the working week and how we can redefine leisure so that our free time is something more than just recovering from being knackered after working all week.

Matt actually echoes the Fabians’ timidity when he remarks that BI is seen as a “progressive reform”, well yes, but it could be much more than that.

**If BI was linked to the growing call for a Land Value Tax (part of which could go to pay for a BI), the labour movement could have a winning combination here.**

John Cunningham, Adlington





# EU: stay and fight for a workers' Europe

**US President Barack Obama is expected this week to make a speech calling for Britain to remain in the European Union.**

When Obama does this, he is saying that Britain remaining in the EU is what is best for capitalism. However, what is bad for capitalism, in this case leaving the EU, is not necessarily good for workers. Remaining in the EU is also better for workers.

European capitalism (which the US has an interest in keeping stable) has — in its own interests — substantially integrated Europe both economically and politically. By doing so, European bosses have also increased the possibilities for Europe-wide workers' unity.

To try to break up the process of integration is as regressive as trying to turn the internet off because that is run by capitalist companies. Or attempting to abolish parliament without bothering to ensure that bourgeois democracy is replaced with something better.

Our method of fighting capitalism is not to smash up all of its achievements, or to create chaos and reaction just because it is "bad for capitalism". Conditions of chaos and reaction are not good for building a better or more humane society. We want to take over the world that capitalism has made, by exploiting our labour and productive capacities, and make it our own.

Capitalism operates across European borders. The EU referendum result will not change that.

On a recent trip to France to join protests in Paris against the French government's new anti-worker law, Workers' Liberty activists met and discussed with some German workers, one of whom worked as a train driver for Deutsche Bahn. Deutsche Bahn owns transport companies across Europe, including the Arriva train and bus company in Britain.

Leaving the EU would not place serious limitations on Deutsche Bahn's ability to exploit workers in Britain and in Germany, or to stop it doing what it does now — playing them off against each other. It would, however, increase the barriers to workers in Britain and Germany organising together against Deutsche Bahn.

This referendum is largely being fought on the question of immigration. A vote to leave the EU will be a vote against migration and against migrants. That will strengthen the

anti-migrant right and set the tone for attacks on migrant rights. Such a political climate will turn workers in Britain against migrants and workers from other countries.

During his pre-referendum negotiations with the EU Cameron tried to get greater powers over benefits (especially for migrants) and employment law for the British government. He had to settle for some lesser, but still awful, benefit cuts. The right of the Tory party alongside UKIP are campaigning to leave the EU because they want to go further than Cameron against migrant rights, against immigration, and against workers' rights.

The protections usually cited by those campaigning to "remain" — the European Court of Human Rights, the Working Time Directive, paid annual leave, health and safety protection, and rights for part-time, agency and outsourced workers, TUPE — do play a role in protecting us from the worst things the Tories want to do. But these protections are not infallible.

Moreover such rights had to be fought for and won, and they will need to be defended, by our movement. Our campaign to remain in the EU must do more than defend these protections. It must organise for our own ideas — for a workers' Europe.

We criticise the governments of Europe. We fight for an end to austerity and a levelling up of wages, conditions, services and rights across the continent.

We call for democratic reform of the EU, including a sovereign EU Parliament.

**We fight for freedom of movement and an end to "Fortress Europe".**

## Campaign for a workers' Europe!

**Now that campaigning for the European referendum is underway, we need to get out on the streets and make the case for staying in the EU and fighting for a workers' Europe.**

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# What's bad for capitalists may not be not good for us

## THE LEFT

By Dan Katz

**Solidarity has not been slow to ridicule the SWP and Socialist Party and their daft position to campaign with the right-wing of the Tory Party and UKIP for a vote to leave the EU.**

Imagine their members in a union meeting, putting their position. Their "left" words against the "EU capitalist project" will give cover to the most backward and xenophobic views in the labour movement. Anyone who wants tighter immigration rules or who is prejudiced against Eastern Europeans will be supporting this position.

The leaflet of the left leave campaign (#Lexit), in which the SWP are involved, complains that the "so-called freedom of movement of labour does not apply to non-EU citizens." And so what do they conclude? Help the right wing of the Tory Party abolish the limited rights of movement that already exist, to the benefit of tens of millions of workers across Europe, and impose much worse restrictions on movement?! They advocate a levelling down of workers' rights.

And why do they write, "so-called freedom of movement of labour"? This right is real, and by no means "so-called," for tens of millions of workers across Europe.

The freedom of movement across the EU is not just a matter of "convenience". It is altering the relationship between the peoples of Europe.

The fact that we can drive for hundreds of miles across mainland Europe without being stopped for a passport check means more than saving a few hours of needless bureaucracy. The ability to make such a journey is a symptom of a reduction in suspicions and antagonism (as well as borders) between the peoples of Europe, within the EU structure.

Compare the current relationships between the peoples of Europe with the situation in the first half of the twentieth century. Is this not progress?

Yes, it is not perfect. Yes, the EU is capitalist. Yes, we know the capitalists want cheap labour. But we, the internationalist left, have a profound interest in a reduction of nationalist antagonisms, too. It makes working-class cooperation and solidarity easier. The capitalists are creating better conditions for us to do our work against them.

Attempting to undo everything capitalism has done is a utopian and reactionary project. We need a clear grasp of what capitalism has built that we can use to fight for, and build, working class solidarity and socialism.

And, yes, we know it is the working class's job to unite Europe. But, since our class has not managed that yet, the capitalists have got on with doing this work. They have brought Europe together for their own reasons and in their own way. We need to understand clearly what we can take and use from what they have done.

The EU project is bureaucratic, in many ways undemocratic, and often carried out at the expense of workers. Indeed, the Industrial Revolution and the creation of a parliamentary democracy in the UK was a similar process. But only a fool would advocate the abolition of UK democracy and capitalism as a step toward socialism.

Free movement inside the EU is a

real, important gain. It should be defended against those who want to abolish it, and expanded it. Socialists favour the reduction of borders and barriers, and we are against attempts to separate out and divide workers. For that reason we are for a Federation of European states. Breaking up existing European unity is step away from that goal, not towards it.

There are now slightly more than two million foreign EU workers in the UK. What do we say to them, comrades in #Lexit? "In the interests of internationalism and anti-racism we'd like to help the Tory right wing to legislate against you. Too bad if you suffer, because Cameron will lose his job, and that's more important to us."

## #LEXIT

**The #Lexit leaflet states that the City, the CBI and Cameron want to remain in Europe.**

Yes, but the people who want to get out are even worse! Cameron wants to maintain the status quo; Johnson, Gove and UKIP have a programme to make matters even worse by hurting our friends, co-workers and comrades from other EU states who work here.

All the hot air about the "capitalist EU" is, in fact, back-handed support of the only other real alternative: an isolated capitalist UK. With an even worse, right-wing Tory government. Are they really trying to tell us that would be a step forward for the left?

Attempting to justify helping the right to a serious political victory, this section of the left pretends that a vote to leave will bring about a Tory crisis that will lead to a general election and a Corbyn victory. Such dreaming is more about giving SWP members something to tell punters than serious politics.

Corbyn does not buy into this nonsense. Speaking last week Corbyn advocated a vote to remain because: "Just imagine what the Tories would do to workers' rights here in Britain if we voted to leave the EU in June."

He said very plainly: "It wouldn't be a Labour government negotiating a better settlement for working people with the EU. It would be a Tory government, quite possibly led by Boris Johnson and backed by Nigel Farage, that would negotiate the worst of all worlds: a free market free-for-all shorn of rights and protections."

So why does the SWP bloc with a rag-bag of Stalinists in this "left leave campaign", Lexit? Because they are the prisoner of a political framework shared with the Stalinists: any damage done to the capitalists is good for us. The EU referendum is positive proof that this framework — not just their position on this immediate question — is nonsense.

**Time to rethink, comrades.**



The British approach





## Fight for freedom of protest, organisation and speech on campuses

**This is a draft statement put together by activists who are looking to set up a campaign around free speech and the right to organise on university and college campuses. Get in touch if you're interested or to tell us what you think. Email Monty Shield, Queen Mary University of London left activist, [monty\\_shield@hotmail.com](mailto:monty_shield@hotmail.com).**

**"Freedom is always freedom for those who dissent. The essence of political freedom depends on all the invigorating, beneficial, and cleansing effects of dissenters." – Rosa Luxemburg**

This campaign will fight to defend and extend free speech and the right to organise on campus, which are currently under threat from many sides – as an essential part of fighting oppression and building effective student and education workers' movements.

The problems we face:

1. The Prevent agenda is targeting Muslim students, seeking to turn lecturers, education workers and other students into informers, fostering suspicion and racism.

2. The government wants universities and colleges to ban speakers who would be quite legal elsewhere. Administrations ban speakers and meetings, even without such

prompting, which they think might cause trouble or uproar.

3. Campus spaces are becoming increasingly commercialised. College bosses stop or at least discourage student poster, leafletting, and campaigning to prevent these activities disrupting their commercial space.

4. Many student unions are run as businesses rather than organisations to defend the interests of students, with sabbatical positions taken by people who want to boost their CV. This culture is politically opposed to student organising. Even good student unions have become infected by this culture, eg by going along with college rules or pressure, or avoiding controversy. Organising societies, meetings, organising stalls and public activity is generally getting harder.

5. When campus workers' or student organisations have taken militant action in defence of people's rights they have been targeted for bureaucratic and in some cases police harassment.

6. Successive governments have turned students into consumers, and lecturers into producers of market-oriented teaching and research. The current Green Paper on Higher Education will lock down these developments. The range of courses will be further narrowed. Teaching which is politically and

socially critical, along with working-class, black, feminist, etc, education will be further discouraged.

7. Unfortunately the shutting down of debate and campus life is sometimes promoted by student activists who see themselves as left-wing – sometimes with good intentions, of promoting the rights of the oppressed, but almost always harmfully. Discouraging debate and controversy will not make campuses, let alone society, "safe". In fact it will help shut down the very mechanisms the oppressed need to fight for their rights.

8. Lack of clarity about these issues on the left has allowed student right wingers, most of whom have little genuine interest in democratic rights, to demagogically exploit them for their own purposes.

The freedoms we champion have been most denied to the left, the oppressed and the exploited. To defend and extend them, however, we need to demand they are applied consistently, including to people we don't like – whether that's Tories, or Islamists, or people who we feel have betrayed the left. There are of course specific issues about how communities, including campus communities, need to defend ourselves (in the first instance physically) against fascist and far right groups, but in general the way to challenge oppression and bad ideas (and educate the people influenced by them) is argument, debate and political struggle, not bans.

Taking inspiration from the long history of student struggles for freedom of speech and organisation – like the Berkeley Free Speech Movement of the 1960s in California, or the Latin American movements for "university reform" which succeeded in banning the police from campuses – we will fight for freedom of speech, debate, organisation and action on campuses in order to allow a flowering of student and workers' organisation and struggle.



A protest in 2014 against the suspension of students for occupying Birmingham University.

# The press

By Matt Cooper

**Workers' Liberty draws on and stands in a long tradition of the left standing up for the freedom of the press and free speech.**

We believe the attacks the *Guardian* and its journalists faced over the publication of Edward Snowden's revelations showed the unequal battle the press often faces when pitted against state power. Much of the privately-owned media has abandoned serious reporting and analysis of the news. At the same time, there is increasing pressure from within civil society, including from sections of the left, to censor anything that might give offence. We have opposed that political drift.

However this article will address an issue about the limits of media power over the individual. What should socialists say about personal privacy from media intrusion?

Freedom of expression and freedom of the press is sometimes presented as an absolute right, but, like all rights in human society, these rights should exist only in relationship to other rights. All rights should, inevitably be limited. In my view, there is no automatic reason why freedom of the press should trump the right to privacy.

There are many on the left who take a libertarian position. In this view, accepting that the state should have any power over the press would open up the press to censorship. Given the interests the state represents that would empower the rich. It would work against the ability of labour and socialist



In 1984 print workers at the *Sun* refused to produce a picture of striking miners' leader Arthur Scargill to Hitler.



# s, regulation, and personal privacy

movements to organise.

The state is a capitalist state for sure, but legal rights and the rule of law are not entirely sham things. Legal rights can often be substantive and real, worth defending and extending. Logically legal limitations on press freedom, in the interest of promoting another kind of legal rights, cannot be ruled out on principle.

Two recent issues have brought the focus of personal privacy to the fore: the publication of stories about the personal life of the Conservative Minister for Culture, John Whittingdale; and the *Sun on Sunday's* attempts to quash a court injunction stopping it publishing details of the extra-marital sex life of a well-known entertainer.

Although both these cases involve powerful and rich people, the issue of privacy does not only affect such people. Media intrusion into lawful private activities affects ordinary people too. One example is the way Stuart Jeffries' private life was scrutinised in 2011 when he was briefly a suspect in the Joanna Yeats murder case.

The Whittingdale case is a complex business. When the pro-regulation pressure group Hacked Off and the BBC's *Newsnight* released the story they claimed their interest in doing so was not about John Whittingdale's private life, but about why the four newspaper groups which had the story chose not to publish it. The suggestion is that these newspapers were holding the story as a threat over Whittingdale (who was the chair of the House of Commons Select Committee on Culture, which scrutinises press regulation). Or that those newspapers did not wish to antagonise someone in a powerful position.

Hacked Off has suggest that Whittingdale has been effectively blackmailed by the press into not implementing the press regulation proposed by the Leveson Inquiry.

This is not credible. Whittingdale has long been in favour of light press regulation, and the decision to not implement the full Leveson proposals appears to have come from the government.

The only justification for Hacked Off and the BBC releasing the story is to expose the hypocrisy of the press. But surely

there is little public interest justification for the publication of a story about a single man's relationship (and even if he were married, so what?)

The mystery celebrity of the *Sun's* story is also entitled to privacy. Their married relationship has been described as "open", and that's the news. News? Really? Even if they were "cheating", what right does anyone else have to know? It matters little that the courts have blocked publication of the story, as anyone with ingenuity, a computer and a search engine find out the identity of the celebrity. This story has been created by the press; the question is, should they ever have started looking?

Should personal privacy be merely necessary collateral damage in tussles over the regulation of the press and Leveson? Perhaps. But the mystery celebrity story, where there is clearly no "public interest", shows that the mainstream big business press have no respect whatsoever for personal privacy. Curiosity about the lives of others is one thing, but prurient prying into the sexual activities of others should not be public, with information spread to mass audiences or readerships. Isn't it time society took a collective decision to abandon this kind of behaviour?

Should the left respond to unjustified intrusions into personal privacy by supporting tighter legal regulation of the press to protect individual privacy as Leveson suggested? (There is much else in Leveson's proposals, some of it terrible, but that is not the issue here).

There are a number of reasons why this is not the path to go down.

One reason is that, as with many rights, it is those who can hire lawyers (and can afford the cost of losing in court) who will take best advantage of privacy rights. Libel laws are meant to protect against unsubstantiated allegations, laws can be used to block the publication of the truth. Famously, MacDonalds used the courts to attempt to silence their critics (the McLibel case).

Secondly, there is much "private" and legal activity that the left would want to be known publicly. Much of the material in the Mossack Fonseca "Panama Papers" relates to legal, private financial dealings. Reporting on people's private lives extends beyond a prurient interest in sex. Important questions of wealth and economic power are involved here. Corporations have also been known to assert their right to privacy. It is a central ideology of capitalism that economic power is a private matter, which can evade state or democratic control or even scrutiny.

The defence for publishing people's private financial relationships — that there is a "public interest" in so doing — is not a fixed definition. Its current definition reflects a long struggle (not just by the left, but by liberal sections of the media) to hold economic power to account. This limited accountability of economic power should be defended and extended. It would be easy for economic power to roll back accountability under the guise of protecting privacy.

Sometimes even sensationalist revelations have their place. There was a time when the rich and the powerful lived alongside a press

that was deferential to their position and did nothing to reveal the "real" people. This was breached in 1963, not by the mainstream press, but by a new publication, *Private Eye*, which broke the story of the Profumo scandal and exposed the sexual mores of a section of the British ruling class. This not only showed the hypocrisy of the ruling elite, but helped to liberalise attitudes to sex. Many think that decades of libel actions have made *Private Eye* less willing to take political risks, and that privacy laws would only worsen the rot.

Finally the talk about controlling information has to consider the role of the internet and the control of internet communications. The injunction against the publication of information on the mystery celebrity applies only to England and Wales, but some internet portals and search engines have agreed to impede access to this information from within the UK. Google already restricts access to information in the public realm in the name of personal privacy because of EU regulation. Further moves to shore up personal privacy will cause big business internet providers, as

well as state agencies, further powers to police flows of information.

So what is the answer? Parts of the media have never been interested in news, but celebrity-defined media has grown. It is difficult to see how the bars of coverage this not-so-gilded cage might be broken. There is no immediate answer.

In the longer term, building the strength of unions and fighting to embolden political life in both the old and new media is one way to address this. In 1984 print workers at the *Sun* refused to produce a front page comparing the striking miners' leader Arthur Scargill to Hitler. The vast majority of journalists want to write accurate news about important issues, not Z-list celebrity tittle-tattle; those journalists should organise.

**Beyond that we need a media that is under social, not private or state control. As much as issues of private privacy are important, it is unlikely that short-term palliatives to protect rights to privacy will move us closer to that goal.**

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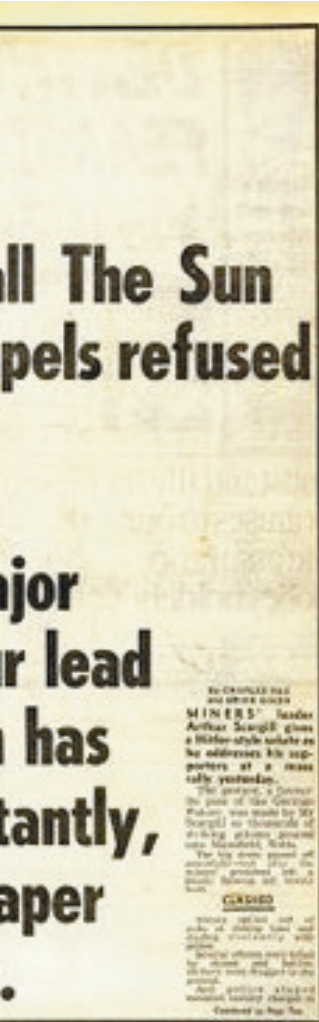
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# The limitations of Trotskyism

**Second part of Steve Bloom's review of *The Fate of the Russian Revolution, volume two: The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism*, edited and with an introduction by Sean Matgamna. The first part of this review was published in *Solidarity* 400.**

**This book represents a continuation of the time-honoured Trotskyist practice of attempting to defend some particular current of Trotskyist thought, whatever that current happens to be, as the "true" continuation of Trotskyist thought by demonstrating that a different current is or was an imposter — or worse, a betrayer.**

It's time for all wings of the Trotskyist movement to abandon this approach. [It] has produced a collection of tiny warring grouplets rather than a movement.

It is fine to champion the good work and political insights that any specific current of Trotskyism may have achieved. [But] we should, however, simultaneously acknowledge that whatever current we identify with also suffered from significant limitations, that other currents carried out useful political work and developed important theoretical insights too.

Further it's time for us to relativise the Trotskyist tradition itself. There was a period of history when we could reasonably envision the rebirth of a global revolutionary movement based on the Trotskyist experience. But as the 21st century continues to develop in ways that no Trotskyist could have imagined as recently as the 1980s, that prospect becomes increasingly remote. It nevertheless remains the framework for Matgamna as he compiles this volume.

I do, of course, agree that there are essential lessons which Trotskyist history and ideology can offer to the future development of revolutionary ideas. There are also, however, aspects of our historic ideology which are now outmoded and bypassed by the passage of the 20th century. A discussion about which is which should give considerable weight to insights developed by other genuinely revolutionary currents that have emerged as a result of the 20th-century experience. Some of these have roots in the Maoist movement, some in national-liberation struggles, some in guerrilla warfare and the Cuban revolution, some coming out of an anarchist tradition, some based on ecofeminist or indigenous-centric ideologies, etc.

There is an arrogance in the belief that Trotskyism somehow has a privileged place in this process. If we are as correct in our historical conclusions as we believe we are — or even if we just come close — an equal place with others ought to be sufficient. And I would argue that even a hint of Trotskyist arrogance will get in our way if our goal is to gain a hearing for the lessons we can in fact contribute to "a revived revolutionary socialist movement". We need to be as respectful of other peoples' histories as we are asking them to be of ours.

It remains essential for us to acknowledge that for the rest of humanity, and therefore in particular for most young people radicalizing today, there's not much reason to look at our current and see the same thing that we see when we look at ourselves. Our achievements are insufficient, important as they may still be. Yet this is the audience we have to reach, and in a massive way.

Sean Matgamna's claims to objectivity are dubious, as already noted. In his introduction to the book he writes:

"This volume tries to provide a broader political picture by presenting in their own words the different sides of every dispute it covers. Of course, even then selection can serve to distort. All I can offer the reader is assurance that I have not knowingly held back anything that would change the picture my selection paints".

The word "knowingly" provides an escape hatch. But let's leave this aside, accept as true that Matgamna managed to include representative arguments on different sides of every dispute. There remain other ways to distort the picture — such as writing a long introduction, instructing readers about how they ought to interpret or understand the arguments that are presented by both sides. It is also striking that in the final 143 pages of the book (Chapter 13 titled "The working class is central" and a final collection of "essays") "Orthodox" ideas are represented by just two pieces, both by Trotsky, taking up a total of 7 pages. The remaining 136 pages are given over to seven contributions by three different authors presenting the "Heterodox" viewpoint.

## TELEGRAM

**I would also like to challenge Matgamna's objectivity by looking closely at one question taken up in his introduction. He considers two texts representing the "Orthodox" viewpoint: a telegram sent by James P. Cannon to Stalin in July 1941 and a minimum program for Russia at war published by *The Militant* that same month. Here is some of what he has to say:**

"Missing [from the program] only was the idea of a workers' anti-Stalinist 'political' revolution. In its place was an appeal to Stalin to do what for Trotsky, and for Cannon up to that point, could only be done by that new working-class 'political' revolution."

And further:

"It would have been less absurd to demand such a program from Winston Churchill or Franklin D. Roosevelt than to express it as 'demands' to Stalin."

But this is a badly distorted picture of what was taking place. Only the telegram was addressed to Stalin. The minimum program was not addressed to Stalin but to "The Soviet Union" and the "Orthodox" made a distinction between "the Soviet Union" and its Stalinist leadership. By appealing to "the Soviet Union" the minimum program was hoping to appeal to the workers of the USSR, the force that was capable of carrying through a political revolution. Even more importantly, it was appealing to those workers in the USA and other nations who supported the USSR in the war. Here is the one single reference to the Stalinist bureaucracy contained in the minimum program itself: "Whether the Stalinist bureaucracy accepts or rejects this program, we shall defend the Soviet Union. But we insist that this minimum program is vital in order to strengthen immeasurably the fighting power of the Soviet Union." In other words, the program stands as a call for action, independently of any support or opposition to that call by the bureaucracy.

A telegram to Stalin, if it is intended as a genuine appeal for Stalin to act, is one thing. A telegram to Stalin, if it is a publicity stunt to get the attention of workers in the USA who believe Stalin represents the Russian Revolution (so the party could begin to discuss with them) is quite another.

Matgamna quotes Cannon, explaining that the key task of the SWP at the time was, precisely, to reach an audience of Stalinist work-

ers: "We should intensify our work among the Stalinists; try to reach them at all costs; fix the responsibility for the catastrophe of the Soviet Union where it really belongs — on the shoulders of Stalin and his gang; and try to win over every possible Stalinist worker to the movement of the Fourth International." This orientation explains all of the so-called omissions and contradictions that Matgamna notes in the SWP's public propaganda at the time.

Matgamna misrepresents the SWP's attempt to speak a language that the Stalinist workers might comprehend as a programmatic capitulation to Stalinism itself.

I would say that this is the most serious flaw in Matgamna's approach. He seems incapable of looking at and considering the ideas and actions of the "Orthodox" from the point of view of the "Orthodox" themselves — something which is absolutely essential if we want to develop an objective historical assessment.

Matgamna, along with the "Heterodox" spokespeople in the articles he has collected, rejects the "trade union analogy" — the idea that the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR could be likened to a bureaucratic trade union leadership except that it holds power at the level of the state rather than in a union. But if Matgamna is judging the actions of the Cannon wing of the movement he needs to keep in mind that its approach to the USSR was always guided by the trade union analogy. Thus, just as a revolutionary caucus in a union might put forward a program for a strike without directly attacking the bureaucratic leadership of the union — so Cannon sent his telegram and the SWP conceived of and presented its program for the USSR in war. It was not with the expectation that Stalin would carry out the stated policy, but with precisely the opposite assumption: that Stalin would do no such thing, and that this might then create a bridge for the Trotskyist movement to begin a discussion about why not with workers who had illusions in Stalin, but who were also capable of understanding the value of the measures proposed by the party.

Let me conclude by simply expressing a personal grievance that takes shape after reading Matgamna's collection of documents, a grievance that I feel a need to get off my chest. We will also see that it's more than just a personal grievance. It reveals something important about how not to understand this history.

One of the objections raised by Shachtman's caucus against the leadership of the SWP during the 1939-40 faction fight was that Cannon and his followers refused to engage in a respectful debate — that is, one which puts a priority on each participant accurately representing and honestly considering the opposing viewpoint, acknowledging what might be correct and useful in that viewpoint even while continuing to disagree. As noted above I am, actually, sympathetic to this complaint, since my experience in the SWP decades later demonstrated to me that the party really did suffer from an acute deficiency in this regard.

Yet I note, on reading the multiple polemical contributions by Shachtman himself which appear in these pages, that his personal style is the most disrespectful to those he is debating of any I have encountered during my nearly half a century in the revolutionary movement. Anyone whom Shachtman disagrees with is the lowest form of life imaginable. He freely heaps scorn and ridicule upon them, obviously intoxicated by the brilliance of his own polemical wit (which

is considerable), relying far too often on the clever turn of a phrase. I will limit myself to two examples:

"We come now to the third of Frankel's five points. Here we must admonish the reader. He must resolve in advance not to laugh himself sick. On this he must be firm, for Frankel offers more temptations than the unforewarned reader can possibly resist".

"The new tactic, says the loudest of the party's empty barrels, was made 'some nine months ago [by] our committee.' And 'the discerning reader will have noticed that we conducted our propaganda in this spirit for a good many months.' But since hellishly few readers are discerning, and since those that are would have needed a microscope; and since, after all, a turn in policy ought to be made for the information and guidance of every reader including those with less 'discernment; and since the empty barrel has discerned that it requires little discernment to see through his dodges — he adds, 'We propose now to incorporate this tactical prescription in our resolution, in order to make unambiguously clear to all the nature of our tactical adjustment and the reasons for it'".

I find this style of polemic so off-putting that even when I agreed fully with Shachtman's viewpoint, as in his defence of Leninism, I found myself mostly wanting to look for what was valid in the position he was opposing. A current whose leader engages in this kind of debate has no right, I would like to suggest, to claim some superior commitment to the search for "understanding" through "intelligent and loyal discussion." Shachtman, it seems clear, was seeking something else.

This observation about Shachtman's polemical style makes an important point about how we should read and judge the entire collection of documents that Sean Matgamna has pulled together, in particular whether we can simply accept the claims of either side about itself. Clearly not — though Matgamna seems to accept what the "Heterodox" say about such matters far too easily, while rigorously interrogating only what the "Orthodox" have to say. We need instead to look more closely and more critically at all of the participants (and also more charitably).

As we consider this or any history of the revolutionary movement, although we do occasionally discover the great hero or the evil villain, for the most part that is not what we should be looking for or expecting to find. For the most part we should expect, instead, to find complex human beings with strengths and weaknesses, making contributions to the struggle for human liberation at the same time as they are also making serious mistakes. Only rarely will one of these two things completely negate the other.

The best histories, written by the best historians, will reveal this kind of complex reality to us in new and surprising ways. Everyone who thinks they know something about the history of Trotskyism during World War Two will probably find things they didn't know if they read this book, or at least be reminded of things they had forgotten.

**Still, we might have had a far more useful exploration of the relevant history had the editor not started out seeking to expound a tendentious viewpoint which elevates one side to the supreme good while reducing the other to the essence of error.**

• Abridged.  
• **The Two Trotskyism Confront Stalinism can be purchased for £23 including postage from [bit.ly/twotrotskyisms](http://bit.ly/twotrotskyisms).**



# The rage of the refugee

Phil Grimm reviews 'Dheepan'

In the opening scene of 'Dheepan', beaten soldiers of the Tamil Tigers are burning their war dead. They have been brutally defeated by state forces in the Sri Lankan civil war.

As the funeral pyre burns in the jungle clearing, one man quietly changes out of his uniform and into tattered civilian clothes. He has had enough of the killing; it's time to get out.

The film tells the story of three Tamil refugees. The former soldier meets up with two total strangers at a camp — a woman and a young girl. They have all lost their families in the war, and agree to pretend to be a family themselves in the hope that it will help them gain asylum in Europe. The soldier adopts the name of the dead man whose passport he has acquired — Dheepan.

I can think of few films where I have started rooting for, and fearing for, the protagonists so soon after first being introduced to them. The terrible vulnerability of the impromptu "family" is constantly underlined. Their emigration plunges them into a dark, threatening world. Police sirens scream through the Paris night; growling dogs lurch from the gloom of graffitied stairwells; ominous gunshots are heard in the night.

The refugees are housed in a relentlessly grim housing estate on the outskirts of Paris, which is dominated by feuding drug gangs. Dheepan is given a job as the caretaker, the young girl is enrolled in a local school and, after a tortuous period trapped in the tiny



flat, Dheepan's "wife" gets a job as a carer.

One of the great successes of the film is to show how precarious and frightening is the situation of the refugees, without in anyway infantilising them or diminishing them as rounded, complex characters.

All of the characters have their own inner worlds, and continue to have their particular aspirations. The most interesting character is the woman pretending to be Dheepan's wife. Yalini, brilliantly played by the Indian actor Kalieaswari Srinivasan, is trapped in a family role that she knows is false. She is enraged, guilty and conflicted about having to be a mother to a daughter she didn't want and doesn't even know.

She simultaneously longs for the relative freedom of the white French women she sees walking past her window, and also toys with

the idea of wearing a hijab (despite not being Muslim) because it might help her fit in with other migrant women on the estate. Her rage at her situation is the beating heart of this film.

The plot takes a very dramatic turn at the end of the film. Without wanting to give too much away, the latent violence of the film comes to the fore and things escalate very quickly. In my opinion, the drama steps up so quickly in the final 20 minutes so that it unbalances the piece as a whole, and begins to detract from what is otherwise a very subtle portrait of the refugee experience.

**Nevertheless, 'Dheepan' is a wonderful, moving film that reminds us that as socialists and as human beings we owe our solidarity to those trying to win their safety and freedom, against the odds.**

# Looking back at his Manor

Daniel Randall reviews Kano's 'Made In the Manor'

On 'Made In The Manor', his fifth album, East London emcee Kano weaves a number of distinct thematic threads into a vivid, vital whole.

Much analysis of this record will undoubtedly focus on its "realism", or "grittiness", ascribing a social-realist intent to Kano's tales of working-class black life in East London. But that would not do the lyrical content here justice.

In fact, there's an almost magical-realist quality to much of the writing. The titular "manor" is evoked as a kind of nostalgic, contradictory dream space, frozen in time as a snapshot of a particular point in Kano's childhood and adolescence, but also penetrated by the influences of past and future. It's somewhere Kano is obviously profoundly attached to but simultaneously pulling away from — "don't get stuck here", he warns the manor's "concreted souls", in an almost spoken-word-esque interlude on 'Seashells In The East'.

This album is vastly more complex than the kind of basic, "life-in-the-streets-was-tough"-type storytelling register one might be tempted to impose on it. There's a wistful, melancholic character to many of the reminiscences, as Kano acknowledges that his success and celebrity have fundamentally altered his relationship to that world and those that populate it.

This isn't a genre record in a narrow sense, but this album does "belong", if one can speak of belonging in this context, to one mu-



sical genre, or movement, more than others: grime. That isn't immediately apparent, as Kano's style, with its varied cadences which are often slower than grime's traditional double-time, seems to mark him out as more of a "rapper" than a grime emcee. But features from Wiley and, on bonus track, JME, root the album in the genre, and one of the themes here is the musical and cultural development of grime — a uniquely black-British music that synthesises elements of sound-system culture and its offshoots (jungle, drum and bass, basement, etc.) with hip-hop to create an entirely new form.

"Wiley was Quincy and Michael was Dylan", Kano puts it on 'New Banger', comparing Wiley to the pioneering producer Quincy Jones, who shaped Michael Jackson's career, and Dizzee Rascal (aka Dylan Mills), Wiley's sometime protégé, to Jackson himself.

Grime now seems more confident in its own identity, and 'Made In The Manor' acts as a kind of musical-historical map of the social and cultural influences that developed it

up to its current point. The sampling of Tempa T's 'Next Hype' on the album's opening track is a clear signal of that, acknowledging a track that, perhaps more than any other, typifies grime's raw phonic and lyrical aggression, but which also, in many ways, was an outlier for its emergence from the underground.

Kano repeatedly insists he isn't looking for "mass appeal", and that he's not making club bangers ("play this on the way to the club and not in it", as he raps on 'Endz'). His artistic ambitions clearly extend way beyond that, but this record does have mass appeal, as evidenced, at least partially by its top 10 chart performance; it is intensely listenable, has exceptional replay value, a phonic diversity and range which keeps it consistently interesting. 'Made In The Manor' confirms Kano as one of the most articulate and gifted emcees of his generation.

The conversation about the greatest British albums of all time tends to involve 'Revolver', 'Sticky Fingers', 'London Calling', perhaps Arctic Monkey's 'Whatever People Say I Am'... (all albums, incidentally, which were produced by white artists but which, in different ways, draw on and are influenced by black music and black experience).

**Although it has only been released for a short time, 'Made In The Manor' — at once both realist and fantastical; anchored in a specific experience but speaking beyond it; conscious of its place in musical and cultural history but resisting conservative urges to hermetically seal a musical form in a moment in time — deserves to be a prominent part of that conversation from now on.**

# Singing for the underdog

By Gerry Bates

The country and western singer Merle Haggard, who has died, is best known for, 'The Fighting Side of Me', a song in which he expressed the feelings of American patriots against the Americans who opposed US involvement in Vietnam:

*I hear people talkin' bad*

*About the way we have to live here in this country*

*An' gripin' 'bout the way things oughta be...*

*An' I don't mind 'em switchin' sides*

*An' standin' up for things they believe in...*

*When you're runnin' down my country, man*

*You're walkin' on the fightin' side of me*

Thus he expressed the feelings of most US workers at the time in face of what was seen as a heavily middle class and hippy-bohemian anti-war/anti US movement.

He explained his anti-anti-war attitude as a sense that he didn't know much about Indochina, and neither did the protesters. They should have left it to the government, who did.

Haggard was also the author of a number of sharply class-aware songs about working class experience. Not socialist songs, but valuable songs, nonetheless.

I used to loathe country and western, especially Irish country and western, which can have an awfulness all its own. Sentimentality, religiosity, unreflecting patriotism, espousal of the here-and-now US working class acceptance of capitalist values, is too often part of it. It embodies old-fashioned gender roles. Its performers often wear ridiculous rhinestone-studded "western" costumes. But there is more to it, to some of it anyway.

Country music is too often despised even by socialists who like folk music and Negro blues. Yet it is the music of the American working class, mainly of the white working class, I guess. It is a sort of commercialised folk music, and often includes protest songs and laments, which see things frequently from a working-class and underdog angle.

**Try listening to Haggard's 'Hungry Eyes', 'Working Man Blues', or 'America First'.**

**Hungry Eyes**

*A canvas-covered cabin in a crowded labour camp*

*Stand out in this memory I revived*

*'Cause my daddy raised a family there, with two hard-working hands*

*And tried to feed my mama's hungry eyes*

*He dreamed of something better, and my*

*mama's faith was strong*

*And us kids were just too young to realize*

*That another class of people put us somewhere*

*just below*

*One more reason for my mama's hungry*

*eyes...*

*She only wanted things she really needed*

*One more reason for my mama's hungry eyes*

*I remember daddy praying for a better way of life*

*But I don't recall a change of any size*

*Just a little loss of courage, as their age began to show*

*And more sadness in my mama's hungry eyes...*

*Oh, I still recall my mama's hungry eyes*



# Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

**In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:**

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
  - A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
  - A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
  - Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
  - A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
  - Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
  - Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
  - Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
  - Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!



More online at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org) Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

## Small target, poor aim

### LABOUR

By Rhodri Evans

According to the *Guardian*, the official Labour "in" campaign for the 23 June EU referendum has a budget of £75,000.

To us in the *Solidarity* office that seems a lot, but in Westminster politics it is twopence. Each individual London MP gets £26,000 a year for office rent and bills, £147,000 for staff wages, plus travel and other expenses, on top of their £74,000 salary.

So the Labour "in" campaign has no website of its own, no widely-circulated leaflets and little else besides a tepid Twitter account.

It did tweet the letter to the *Guardian* on 18 April by John McDonnell and other leftish MPs stating: "We are going to vote for Europe, to change Europe... Sovereignty has long escaped national borders and is never coming back. As tough as it is, we have to create a trans-national democratic political and economic union. It is the



Alan Johnson's Labour In campaign: trying not to make waves?

only hope the left has. If the EU didn't exist we would build it now — different and better, yes — but we would still build it".

Mostly, however, the Labour "in" has offered a thin echo of the big-business "Britain Stronger in Europe" line: don't vote "out" because it will disrupt capitalism.

This is a copy of the "small target" strategy of Australian Labor's Kim Beazley after the Liberal John Howard ousted Labor in 1996: keep

quiet, make few waves, give the Tories a free run to discredit themselves. But Howard retained office until 2007; and did much damage in the meantime.

If Brexit wins because only the uninspiring "play safe" argument for "in" is deployed, then the damage will be much greater.

**The left should mobilise! Stay in the EU, fight to change the EU! Bring down the borders!**

## Momentum and the EU referendum

By Sacha Ismail

**With the EU referendum hanging in the balance, the position taken by Momentum could conceivably be important for the result.**

Certainly, with the left nationalist "out" camp getting more organised, it will be important for the political health of the left.

Of course the Labour left has traditionally favoured Britain leaving the EU: Workers' Liberty and its predecessor organisations have always swum against the stream on this. Three factors have broken down that stance: the obvious real-

ities of the referendum, the position taken by Jeremy Corbyn (particularly now after his left-wing 14 April speech) and the influx of new people around the Corbyn campaign and Momentum.

Many Momentum groups are debating the issues — for instance, Lewisham Momentum is holding a debate with speakers including Matt Wrack of the FBU on 23 May. A number of groups have adopted a position — as far as we know, all for "in" and all by a huge majority.

The Momentum National Committee meeting on 21 May is late in the day — but then in reality it was probably always going to be hard

to get much going before the 5 May elections anyway. The NC meeting is an opportunity to take a clear position and get Momentum groups and activists across the country mobilised. Already, on the initiative of a Workers' Liberty supporter, Northampton Momentum has submitted a proposal for a left "in", working with the Another Europe is Possible campaign.

The Momentum NC should vote to campaign for "in" on 21 May. Let's make sure it happens.

**Put a motion for "in" to your Momentum group. Hold a public debate. Get in touch and we can help you.**

## Events

### 26-27 April

Junior doctors' strike

Across the country

- Joint NUT-BMA march in London on 26 April: [bit.ly/23IbefT](http://bit.ly/23IbefT)
- Protest against private health-care companies meeting in London on 26 April: [bit.ly/1Th7VE4](http://bit.ly/1Th7VE4)

### Monday 25 April

Sheffield campaign against school academisation public meeting

6.30pm, St Mary's Community Centre, Sheffield, S2 4QZ  
[bit.ly/1Nzkg1X](http://bit.ly/1Nzkg1X)

### Tuesday 26 April

The left and anti-semitism Workers' Liberty public meeting  
6.30pm, UCL, London  
[bit.ly/1WpNsQ9](http://bit.ly/1WpNsQ9)

### Thursday 28 April

Students for Another Europe meeting

7-9pm, Room S-2.08, King's College, London, WC2R 2LS  
[bit.ly/studentseurope](http://bit.ly/studentseurope)

### Thursday 28 April

Workers' Liberty London forum — Iran: the workers' movement after the nuclear deal  
7-9pm, Indian YMCA, W1T 6AQ  
[bit.ly/iranforum](http://bit.ly/iranforum)

### Saturday 30 April

Workers' Liberty day school: where we came from, and where we're going  
12 noon, meet at New Cross Gate station, London  
[bit.ly/WLschool](http://bit.ly/WLschool)

Got an event you want listing? [solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

## Appeal for photos from our history

**Do you have any old photos of the activity or the people of our tendency — of Workers' Liberty, or before that of Socialist Organiser, of the WSL, of the I-CL, or of Workers' Fight, back to 1966?**

This year is the 50th anniversary of the political current now organised as the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. We are planning publications and events to mark the anniversary.

Five years ago we systematically collated all the old documents and files we had at our office, and deposited them at the library of the London School of Economics: [bit.ly/1ThbzOc](http://bit.ly/1ThbzOc).

We know that there are gaps in that collection, particularly from the earlier years. We also know that we are particularly short of



photographs from the early years of the tendency.

For example, we have one photo of the Workers' Fight/Workers' Power merger national committee, from December 1975 (above) but it's poor quality, and in the office we have almost no other photos of our people or activities from that

era or earlier.

Personal memoir pieces by older comrades about notable class-struggle or political moments in the history will also be useful for the publications and events that we are planning.

**Please contact**  
[awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org).



# Fighting for fast food rights

By Will Stevens

Thursday 14 April was the third annual #FastFoodGlobal day Of action. Workers in fast food, coffee shops and cafes across the world took part in rallies, stunts, marches and other creative actions for higher pay, better conditions and the right of unions to organise.

The Fast Food Rights blog reports that actions took place in over 40 countries, including France, Japan, Argentina, and the UK, with fast food strikes happening in 300 cities across the US. At many protests workers carried signs in different languages, with strikers in the US organising solidarity pictures with French fast food workers, and workers in Japan carrying signs in multiple languages.

The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU) and their Hungry for Justice Campaign in the UK organised many activities in the run up to the day with petitioning for a £10 per hour minimum wage and talking to workers about union organising and defending their



Fast food rights activists in Japan on Thursday 14 April.

rights, in several cities including London, Wakefield and Glasgow.

The protests were backed by Jeremy Corbyn, Labour leader, who said on Twitter, "It's Fast Food Global Day of Action. Solidarity w/ workers across the world who are fighting for decent pay & rights at work".

In Wakefield around 40 trade unionists, activists and young people joined the protest calling for £10 per hour, the right for the BFAWU to organise and an end to zero hour

contracts. As well as the march itself, a gig earlier in the week as well as support from comedian Mark Thomas had helped to boost the profile for the campaign. In the evening a live link was set up to speak to striking US fast food workers.

**More events and organising drives are planned in the coming months.**

• 14 May Fast Food Rights meeting: [bit.ly/1MFYfDQ](http://bit.ly/1MFYfDQ)

## Lambeth councillor speaks out on libraries

By Ruth Cashman

Following the end of the occupation at Carnegie Library, pressure is still mounting to force Lambeth council to back out of its plan to close half the borough's libraries.

Rachel Heywood, councillor for Coldharbour ward has been the first Labour councillor to publicly trash the council's proposals. Heywood is one of the councillors who has been criticising the proposals within the Labour Group for some time, she joined speakers from Unison, the Occupation and Dulwich and West Norwood CLP to address the rally after the 2000 strong Don't Steal Our Libraries march. In a later letter she said;

"Standing up to speak on my own in Windrush Square was a lot harder than walking with those passionate crowds. In doing so I defied the political leadership of Lambeth and put at significant risk my own role as a Labour councillor,

one of which I am immensely proud. But on Saturday, and now, I knew I did the right thing, and I don't regret it.

In times of crisis organisations facing huge pressure can close ranks, pull up the drawbridge, and develop a siege mentality. Any challenge or difference of opinion is interpreted as an attack, and debate experienced as a direct assault.

"The elite, inside their castle, or town hall, can lose sight of what life is like outside the walls, whilst the people on the outside can longer see or understand why certain things are being done to them."

Whilst the fight within the Labour Party intensifies, Lambeth Unison members at the council are broadening and escalating their industrial dispute.

Lambeth Unison members in libraries have taken several days of both official and unofficial strikes. Unison's libraries shop steward explained:

"We are balloting the entire coun-

cil workforce for strike action and we have voted to escalate our action within the library service. We know that the previous Cabinet Member responsible has made veiled threats to use the anti-union laws against us, claiming we don't have a legitimate dispute.

"We believe the 'legitimacy' of strike action is judged in whether it advances the interests of workers and their families, which this does. If the Cabinet Member is referring to the legal legitimacy of the dispute under the regressive Tory anti-union laws, such a matter can only be decided in court. If Lambeth Labour want to deal with their workforce and the community they should serve in the courts, that is their choice and we will defend ourselves appropriately."

**Library campaigners will be marching again on Saturday 30 April, as part of the continuing community campaign against library closures.**

• [defendthe10-lambeth.org.uk](http://defendthe10-lambeth.org.uk)

## Tube workers striking against gentrification

By Ollie Moore

Tube union RMT is preparing to ballot its members in the Lillie Bridge engineering depot for strikes, as Boris Johnson and TfL/LU attempt to accelerate the process of moving work out of the depot so it can be demolished to make way for luxury flats.

The proposed demolition is part of a wider plan to "redevelop" large swathes of the Earls Court

area, so BoJo's super-rich mates can speculate on the luxury accommodation that will be built there. Consultations and "feasibility studies" have been rushed through, or side-stepped altogether, meaning Lillie Bridge workers are in the dark about what will happen to them if and when the redevelopment takes place. The union is demanding a binding, top-level agreement to guarantee that workers' rights don't become collateral damage for property developers' greed.

RMT has supported the

wider Save Earls Court campaign, which has sought to block the redevelopment, which is in no-one's interests but the rich. There is no timetable for the ballot as yet, but when it is announced, and when a yes vote is returned (as we confidently expect it will be), we hope housing campaigners and local community activists will be joining RMT engineers on the picket lines.

**A solid strike could seriously disrupt the developers' plans.**

• [www.saveearlscourt.com](http://www.saveearlscourt.com)



## Thousands march to save NHS

By Simon Nelson

**Between two and a half to three thousand people marched and rallied in Leeds against attacks on the NHS by the Government on Saturday 16 April.**

Organised by Keep Our NHS Public the Yorkshire March for the NHS brought activists, trade unionists, labour party members and first time demo goers together for one of the biggest marches in Leeds for the last ten years.

It was noticeable that Labour Party activists were much more prominent than at many demonstrations previously. Several branches had brought their banners

and the majority of canvassing was cancelled for that morning, with activists and candidates in the election joining the protest and leafleting the public in support of the demo.

There were speeches from junior doctors, care workers, National Union of Teachers activists, and Richard Burgon MP, who rallied the crowd against the Tory attacks:

**"If we don't defend the NHS by any means necessary, at the ballot box, in the streets, on the picket line and at demonstrations, then not only will history not forgive us but we won't deserve to be forgiven... onwards to victory, comrades!"**



On Saturday 16 April a Feminist Fightback organised action prevented a planned procession from a Stratford church to a local abortion clinic to harass women. See [youtu.be/KN6Mvo\\_MPr8](http://youtu.be/KN6Mvo_MPr8) for videos.

## University pay ballot: vote yes

By Cath Fletcher

**Members of UCU, the academic and related staff union, are being balloted for industrial action over a miserly 1% pay offer from university employers.**

The real value of pay in higher education has fallen by 14.5% over the past six years, while in the past year vice-chancellors and principals have received an average 3% rise, bringing their typical pay to £272,000.

University bosses say they can't afford a higher settlement, but, as a percentage of overall higher education spending, staff costs have fallen over the past ten years, from

around 58% of the total to less than 55%. Instead of the basics of universities – teaching and research – money is going into showy capital projects.

UCU's record in the past few pay disputes has been poor. Few resources have been put into developing campus organisation in advance of strikes, leaving weaker branches struggling to sustain the action. The leadership has then used those struggling branches as an excuse to call off strikes. Limited preparation on the ground means activists will need to put in a lot of work to make sure this dispute doesn't go the same way.

**The ballot closes on 4 May.**





# Solidarity

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## “Now is the time for student unions to be what the government is afraid of”

**Sahaya James, a student at South Gloucestershire and Stroud College, part-time member of the National Union of Students national executive, and the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts candidate for NUS Vice President Union Development, spoke to *Solidarity*.**

**How do you think NUS has done over the last year, since more left-wing NUS officers were elected?**

The apparatus of NUS is still tightly controlled by the right, and they have put obstacles in the way of more left-wing officers. NEC right wingers have also continued to act as if they're a majority, ignoring democratic decisions.

At the same time some of the left wingers elected don't have a grassroots activist background. There is a greater willingness to support left-wing policy, but not necessarily great drive on implementing campaigns, particularly in terms of action against the government's HE reforms and Green Paper. Of course there's been good work done by leftwing individual officers; however, I don't think electing more lefties alone was going to transform NUS into a fighting union, particularly not in less than a year.

**What does, and what should, the NUS VP Union Development do? What are your most important issues and policies in this election?**

Many people have no idea what the VP UD does, and people engaged with NUS, like sabbatical

officers, often have quite a dull, bureaucratic conception of it, simply designing training events and so on. Well, training events are themselves political. The training sabbs and others receive has a big impact on what's on the agenda for student unions in the year ahead. If they get right-wing, supposedly “apolitical” training, that reinforces the trends you get with officers elected on the basis of popularity contests and not politics.

Training should equip student unions to resist the onslaught we are facing in education, and to take on running campaigns against students being deported. We also need to put student-worker solidarity at the heart of what unions do. We should be pushing for democratic unions that maintain independence from management and are not dominated by unaccountable trustee boards.

At the moment NUS is very much oriented around relatively well funded HE unions. Most of our members are in FE colleges where unions often don't exist and even where they do on paper, they don't in reality. Even in terms of timing, NUS training is mainly in the summer, which shuts out many new FE officers who are usually elected in the autumn term.

Then there's democracy in NUS. We're facing another “Governance Review”, which will be a tool in the hands of the right, so I'm standing to defend and crucially extend NUS democracy.

**How would you like to see student unions change?**

Especially in light of the Trade Union Bill and the restriction on student unions proposed in the

Green Paper, now is the time to emphasise what SUs are, why they can be powerful and why the government sees them as a threat — because they offer the possibility of real collective organising which can make the power of our millions of students something real. In practice SUs are often just service providers, and NUS's campaign to defend SUs — “Love SUs” — stresses that role, which is okay up to a point, but it misses why we're under attack. The government says that these services can be more effectively “delivered” by private providers — so we can only defeat these attacks by proudly making student unions exactly what the government is afraid of and defending that explicitly.

**There has been a lot of argument about freedom of speech and organisation on campus this year. What's your view on that?**

Some of the response to problems about this, for instance, the demonstration that took place outside NUS [organised mainly by some London university secular and humanist societies] or Peter Tatchell's claims that he was no platformed, are over-reactions. But it's true that some of the more extreme versions of no platforming culture which have been adopted are concerning. In general we should approach harmful views and ideas we disagree with through argument and debate. “No platform policy” should apply only to fascists.

In terms of how it plays out on campuses, obviously the NUS VP UD can't dictate what happens, but I think we can certainly sug-

gest different tactics and a focus on arguing and debating with people, and encourage discussion about the problems that have developed around these issues.

**Would you agree that student struggles have been relatively low-key this year? Why do you think that is? What have the most important struggles been?**

It's definitely fair to say we haven't seen huge levels of militancy over the abolition of grants, or the Green Paper, or FE reforms. However there have been some very important actions by students, but they've not mainly been education focused. I'm thinking about opposing the Prevent agenda, and also on student housing, notably the UCL rent strike. There's also the fight over the scrapping of NHS bursaries, and in solidarity with the junior doctors, and also supporting workers on campus. There's also been important fights around deportations. But for sure compared to last academic year, when we had the wave of occupations around education issues, it's been low key.

I wonder if there's an element of people feel a bit disoriented and not knowing where to start, after the general election and the sheer number of attacks.

**You mentioned Prevent. What do you think about NUS working with Cage?**

Speaking for myself I'm not in favour of working with Cage, but we need to recognise that the NUS Black Student campaign and VP Welfare [Shelly Asquith]'s work around Prevent has been one of the most important things done this year. The arguments it's put



out there have had a big impact, in the labour movement too — NUT conference voted unanimously not to comply. I've also been shocked to see Megan Dunn and other officers getting funding withdrawn from the Student not Suspects tour, violating the autonomy of the liberation campaigns. I don't think her objections to Cage are principled ones, but are about looking respectable.

**What do you think about NUS's relationship to the Corbyn phenomenon and the Labour Party?**

NUS should be doing more to work with the Corbyn-led Labour Party in opposing the Tories. However the NUS right is obviously part of the Labour right, and not everyone on the left is in Labour or at least engaged with Labour politics. The way to pursue it is surely for the student movement to consider what it can do to shape and legitimise proposals for Labour and a Corbyn government, showing that our demands are what people are demanding and organising for on the ground, through grassroots struggles.

**That implies being independent and critical of Corbyn too.**

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